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SIPDIS

STATE FOR AF/W, INL/C, INL/AAE, AND INR

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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: NFIU DIRECTOR ON PUBLIC RELATIONS TOUR

REF: ABUJA 2350

Classified By: PolCouns Walter N.S. Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b & d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In response to a request from Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) Secretary Emmanuel Akomaye for a working meeting on operational matters, he and newly appointed Nigeria Financial Intelligence Unit (NFIU) Director, Norman Wokoma called on DepPolCouns, INLOff, and PolOff on December 2. Akomaye previously told us that he wanted only to discuss INL programs and other technical matters, but instead used the meeting to introduce Wokoma formally as the NFIU's new director, replacing A.B. Okauru who was recently forced to resign. Wokoma and Akomaye told EmbOffs that both would be meeting with the international donor community and other officials in Nigeria within the next week to assure them that Wokoma is the "best man to serve as NFIU Director" and that the NFIU would "continue its close cooperation with the international community under his leadership." Wokoma also indicated that he wants to meet with Egmont, Financial Action Task Force (FATF), UK, and USG officials to assure them that although NFIU's leadership has changed, its commitment to anti-corruption has not. Akomaye gave EmbOffs his assurances that the EFCC's relationship with the USG is tremendously important, explaining Nigeria's overburdened judicial and legislative systems and a volatile press were to blame for any perception of the EFCC's lack of progress. End summary.

New NFIU Director Promises Excellence

12. (C) Less than one week after his meetings with Washington officials and former NFIU Director Okauru's subsequent resignation, Norman Wokoma, former Special Control Unit Against Money Laundering (SCUML) Director, became NFIU's newest Director. Akomaye had originally arranged to have the meeting focus on technical and operational issues with INL, but at the last minute also took the opportunity to introduce Wokoma to Embassy Abuja in an attempt to formalize the latter's leadership role. Wokoma said that he is "the right man for the job, and "will work tirelessly to improve the NFIU's organizational, management, and operational structures." Wokoma also asserted that he is already conducting an intensive effort to build up the banking sector's compliance with Egmont international banking reporting requirements in cooperation with the EFCC. In an attempt to legitimize his role, Wokoma pointed out UNODC's "strong" support for training and new software and DfID's

expressed interest in funding similar NFIU activities. At the end of the meeting, Wokoma again asserted that his credentials will make him an excellent partner in Nigeria's anti-corruption efforts.

Don't Believe Everything They Tell You

¶3. (C) EFCC Commission Secretary Emmanuel Akoyame insisted that the EFCC's relationship with the USG is tremendously important and that continued cooperation is critical to both sides. Akoyame also tried to assure EmbOffs that his organization and the NFIU will work "closely together" to improve Nigeria's fight against corruption. When asked about the EFCC's lack of convictions, however, Akoyame was quick to point out that all roads lead to an overburdened and bureaucratic judiciary. He particularly blamed defense counselors who "object to everything" and "stall the process with jurisdictional battles, affidavits and counter affidavits, and multiple petitions to which judges are obliged to respond." Akoyame also accused a "volatile" press for reporting false information and appealed to EmbOffs to "not believe everything they read in the papers." In many instances, claimed Akomaye, "the nature of EFCC's work will not permit it to reveal to the media its progress on current investigations."

Slow Progress on Legislation

¶4. (C) Beginning with his caveat that "he is not speaking for the EFCC", Akomaye told EmbOffs that while EFCC Chair Waziri supports expeditious passage of the Financial Crimes Court

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Bill (which establishes a separate court system for financial crimes), he does not. Akomaye explained that because superior courts have already been determined in Nigeria's constitution, a Financial Crimes Court would add an unnecessary additional layer of courts that will further stall cases from being prosecuted. Akomaye suggested that it is "better to free up judges from their multiple caseloads, particularly minor cases, to open up space for EFCC cases," referring to constitutional provisions that oblige the courts to prioritize and accelerate EFCC cases.

¶5. (C) COMMENT: It was clear that Wokoma and Akomaye wanted to use their meeting with EmbOffs not just to discuss technical and operational issues, but also to try to introduce and legitimize Wokoma's leadership of the NFIU as part of a larger public relations road show to assure the international community of their commitment to battle corruption. Since we strongly suspect Wokoma of being the one who told Waziri about Okauru's candid critique of the EFCC while in Washington last month (effectively forcing Okauru's resignation), it may be that his new job is in part a reward for telling on his boss. It should also be seen as part of Waziri's efforts to assert control over the NFIU.
END COMMENT.

¶6. (U) This cable coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
Sanders